

Report to: **Partnership Board –Transport for the South East**

Date of meeting: **13 June 2022**

By: **Lead Officer, Transport for the South East**

Title of report: **Local Capability**

Purpose of report: **To update the Board on the outcome of Stage 1 of the Local Capability Tender and agree the list of requests for support from local transport authorities.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to:

- (1) Note the outcome of the procurement exercise;**
 - (2) Note the outputs of findings from the survey engagement with Local Authorities within the TfSE geography; and**
 - (3) Agree the proposed work programme.**
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1. Introduction

1.1 TfSE was awarded funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) in January 2022 with the aim of supporting local authorities in the accelerated delivery of their Local Transport Plans and related existing programmes. Initial work will highlight local authority capability needs and start to identify how these can be addressed.

1.2 The purpose of this paper is to update Board members on the outcome of the procurement exercise for Stage 1 of the work and recent progress.

2 Background to Project

2.1 In October 2021, we were invited by the DfT to bid for additional grant funding covering four workstreams:

- Decarbonisation
- Local Capability
- Bus Back Better
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

2.2 TfSE were successful in the submissions across the four workstreams and as part of the local capability work stream have been granted funding to put in place arrangements to support local authorities to deliver their Local Transport Plans. TfSE bid for £200,000 for this work stream but was awarded £300,000 as part of the grant settlement in January 2022.

2.3 Discussions have been held with the Transport Strategy Working Group and the DfT to agree the best way to proceed with this work. It was agreed that the work should be broken into stages. The first stage is intended to identify the capacity gaps faced by local authorities around the delivery of local transport plans and identify possible solutions for addressing these gaps. The proposed solutions will then be assessed and it is important that this is done in a transparent and open manner. The results of stage one will be discussed with the DfT and local transport authorities before agreeing the best approach for the next stage of the work, which will be administering the support needed by local authorities.

2.4 Following a request for quotation exercise in March 2022 the first stage of the work has been awarded to Arup. This has value of £20,000 and involves working with local authorities in the area to identify current capability gaps in the delivery of Local Transport Plans.

2.5 An initial workshop has been undertaken with officers from the constituent authorities to identify projects that will improve capability across the region. 15 local authority representatives attended the workshop and had the opportunity to discuss the challenges they face and potential solutions.

2.6 The findings of the workshop were used to inform a survey that has been issued to all local transport authorities. The survey offered authorities the opportunity to provide more detail on capability gaps, including modelling and appraisal, consultation assistance, strategy development and equality impact assessment assistance. It also asked authorities to set out proposals for specific support that TfSE could facilitate through the DfT funding. The survey was issued to local authorities on 5 May 2022. We received 8 completed surveys back from the local transport authorities. The deadline for responses was 18 May 2022.

2.7 It is important that there is a clear and transparent method in place to assess project proposals. As such, Arup have developed an assessment matrix that has been applied to projects. A full analysis of the assessment process, including a proposed work programme to the end of March 2023, will be shared with the Board at the meeting on 13 June.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Following the survey analysis, we will be holding a second workshop on 8 June with local transport authorities, this invite was also extended to senior officers. The intention for this meeting is to inform attendees on the outcomes of the assessments and provide details on the proposed prioritisation. The feedback from this meeting, alongside the requests for support will be given to the Board on 13 June.

3.2 A meeting has been scheduled with DfT to discuss the findings of the survey, requests for support and the second workshop. This will take place 14 June and will be used to consider funding mechanisms and best approach to the next stage of the work.

3.3 The DfT have identified improving capability within local authorities as a priority work stream. In addition, the Levelling Up White Paper identifies that government are keen to see the establishment of Centres of Excellence across England. The local capability work stream has the potential to form the basis of a Centre of Excellence for the South East and there is potential for further funding to be directed through this channel to continue to support local authorities. This was explored with attendees at the workshops and through the survey and has been reflected in the 2022/23 Business Plan that the Board agreed in May 2022. The TfSE secretariat will continue to work with officers and the DfT to progress thinking on this concept and report back to the Board in due course.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The Partnership Board is recommended to note the of the procurement exercise and the outputs of findings from TfSE and Arup's survey engagement with Local Authorities.

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